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OFFICIAL

EXAMINER: Sanjiv Shah

FILING DATE: June 3, 1999

TITLE: Universal Forms Engine

RECEIVED
2/13/01INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENTCommissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Applicants wish to apprise the Examiner of a computer program that the assignee executed on an Internet server more than one year before the priority date of the present application. The program, referred to as "ApplyWeb I," processed a relatively small number of college admissions applications from students applying over the Internet. The ApplyWeb I program was monitored and controlled by a subset of the inventors of the present application. The inventors found that the ApplyWeb I program, though functional, was not suitable for supporting the diverse application needs of multiple institutions and therefore developed the present invention.

The ApplyWeb I program was placed on the Internet around September 1996. Applicants estimate that a total of between 350 to 400 admission applications were processed between January 1997 and the critical date of June 4, 1997. Significantly less than that number

CERTIFICATION OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this Information Disclosure Statement is being transmitted via facsimile on the thirteenth of February, 2001 to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231, Group Art Unit 2771 at 702 308 9051.

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of applications would have been processed between when the software was made available September 1996 and December 1996, but the records from that time period are not readily available. About twenty different admissions forms for twelve institutions of higher education were programmed and made available over the Internet at various times before the critical date, though not all forms were available at the same time. Although the ApplyWeb I program theoretically had the ability to share data between applications to different institutions, applicants are not aware of any student completing more than a single application and are not aware that any data sharing between forms took place.

To ensure the proper functioning of an Internet-based college admission application system that supports multiple institutions, it was necessary for the inventors to make the applications available to the public over the Internet. It was also necessary to charge an application fee for submitting the college applications to test the ability of the program to process electronic payments over the Internet. The application fee was also charged, in part, because applicants believed that requesting credit card information for charging an application fee would discourage frivolous applications. The ApplyWeb I program was found to be too inflexible to provide the customized application format and data processing required by the participating institutions.

In using the ApplyWeb I program, a student requested a college application over the Internet from a server. A single page application form was delivered to the student. The ApplyWeb I program was not capable of creating and processing multiple page forms. The student completed the form, and posted it to the server. The entered information was stored in a text file as an ordered pair of the variable name and its value, that is, a name:value pair. The text file of name:value pairs was then sent via electronic mail to the institution to which the application was addressed.

Each college admission application was "hard-coded" and any changes to an application form required rewriting the program that generated the form. ApplyWeb I did not maintain the

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state of an application, and thus could not determine whether an application was in process, complete, or transmitted to the school. ApplyWeb I was incapable of performing data checking. The name:value pairs were stored and the values could be automatically inserted onto a second form completed by the student, although to applicants knowledge this did not occur. No metadata, that is, information about the stored data, was stored with the data. The program did not process the entered information to put the data into a form usable by the college. Although the software program for the application for each school was written separately, the programs used common modules, such as boxes specifying extra curricular activities. These common modules needed to be identical from form to form for compatibility.

If the Examiner needs any additional information with regard to the ApplyWeb I program, please contact applicants' representative and he will provide whatever additional information is necessary.

In accordance with 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.97(g)-(h), the filing of this Information Disclosure Statement shall not be construed as a representation that a search has been made or an admission that the information cited in the statement is, or is considered to be, material to patentability as defined in 37 C.F.R. § 1.56(b).

This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed before the mailing of a first Office action on the merits, and no fee is believed required. The Office is hereby authorized to charge any necessary fees to Deposit Account 50-1635. A duplicate copy of this authorization is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 13 February 2001

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